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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2869
INFO GULF WAR COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT IMMEDIATE
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USCINCCENT MACDILL AFB FL
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 RIYADH 06329

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR
TAGS: [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [MOPS](#) [SA](#) [US](#)
SUBJECT: FAHD OUT OF THE CLOSET

REF: (A) RIYADH 6198; (B) RIYADH 6266

11. (C) SUMMARY: IN A NATIONWIDE SPEECH AT 1400 LOCAL TIME TODAY (1100 GMT, AUGUST 9) KING FAHD PUT SAUDI ARABIA FOUR SQUARE ON THE SIDE OF THOSE COUNTRIES CONDEMNING THE IRAQI INVASION AND CALLING FOR IRAQ TO WITHDRAW FROM KUWAIT IMMEDIATELY AND UNCONDITIONALLY. FAHD ALSO PUBLICLY THANKED THE "U.S., UK AND OTHER FRIENDLY COUNTRIES" WHICH ARE RESPONDING TO SAUDI ARABIA'S CALL FOR DEFENSIVE MILITARY ASSISTANCE. FAHD'S SPEECH IS UNPRECEDENTED FOR ITS CANDOR AND STRAIGHTFORWARD PRAISE OF TWO WESTERN COUNTRIES. IT SHOWS HOW MUCH THE CURRENT CRISIS HAS CHANGED SAUDI ARABIA AND THE MIDDLE EAST. WE ALSO BELIEVE THE SPEECH WILL ENABLE FAHD TO MANAGE DOMESTIC REACTION TO THE INTRODUCTION OF U.S. TROOPS FOR SOME TIME, BUT NOT INDEFINITELY. END SUMMARY

12. (U) THIS AFTERNOON'S NEWS BROADCAST ON SAUDI TELEVISION CARRIED A PERSONAL STATEMENT BY KING FAHD ON THE CURRENT CRISIS. WEARING TINTED GLASSES AND CASTING HIS EYES DOWNWARD AT HIS PREPARED TET THROUGHOUT, FAHD DELIVERED HIS BRIEF (APPROXIMATELY 10 MINUTE) SPEECH RAPIDLY, IN A SOMBER TONE OF VOICE.

13. (U) WE WILL RELY ON FBIS TO PROVIDE THE FULL TEXT OF FAHD'S REMARKS. THE POINTS WE WISH TO HIGHLIGHT ARE:

-- FAHD BEGAN BY REVIEWING THE EVENTS LEADING UP TO AUGUST 2, STRESSING ALL THE EFFORTS (BILATERAL CONTACTS, JEDDAH MEETING ETC.) WHICH SAUDI ARABIA UNDERTOOK FOR THE COMMON GOOD TO SETTLE THE DISPUTE BETWEEN IRAQ AND KUWAIT AND TO PREVENT AN OUTBREAK OF VIOLENCE;

-- FAHD THEN TURNED TO THE IRAQI INVASION ITSELF. HE CALLED IT THE "MOST VICIOUS" (ABSHAA) AGGRESSION OF MODERN ARAB HISTORY AND NOTED THAT IT HAD PRECIPITATED A CRISIS FOR THE WHOLE WORLD.

-- NEXT, FAHD ENUMERATED THE CALLS BY THE UNSC, ARAB LEAGUE, GCC ETC. FOR IRAQI WITHDRAWAL FROM KUWAIT IMMEDIATELY AND UNCONDITIONALLY AND THE RESTORATION OF THE GOVERNMENT OF SHAYKH JABIR. HE UNEQUIVOCALLY ADDED SAUDI ARABIA'S NAME TO THIS LIST.

-- FAHD THEN PRAISED EGYPTIAN PRESIDENT MUBARAK'S CALL FOR AN EMERGENCY ARAB SUMMIT, SAYING THAT IT WOULD LEAD TO AN INCREASE IN ARAB SOLIDARITY.

-- FINALLY, FAHD TURNED TO THE CRITICAL NEED TO PROTECT SAUDI ARABIA, ITS ECONOMY AND ALL THE ACHIEVEMENTS THAT IT HAS MADE IN RECENT YEARS. HE NOTED THAT SAUDI ARABIA COULD NOT SUCCESSFULLY UNDERTAKE ITS DEFENSE BY ITSELF AND THEREFORE THE SAG HAD CALLED ON FRIENDLY COUNTRIES TO ASSIST IT.

-- AT THIS POINT, FAHD THANKED THE "U.S., UK AND OTHER FRIENDLY COUNTRIES" WHICH HAD RESPONDED TO THE SAUDI REQUEST BY PROVIDING AIR AND GROUND FORCES FOR THE DEFENSE OF SAUDI ARABIA AND THE MAINTENANCE OF PEACE AND STABILITY FOR ALL THE STATES OF THE ARAB GULF REGION, YESTERDAY, TODAY AND TOMORROW -- GOD WILLING. HOWEVER,

HE STRESSED THAT SUCH SUPPORT WOULD BE TEMPORARY, AND WOULD END IMMEDIATELY--AS SOON AS THE KINGDOM REQUESTED.

COMMENT:

¶4. (C) AS REFTELS POINTED OUT, SAUDI MEDIA COVERAGE OF THE CRISIS HAS GRADUALLY BEEN GROWING MORE CANDID AND COMPLETE. NOW THE KING HAS GONE ON RECORD PERSONALLY WITH A STATEMENT LAYING OUT CLEARLY WHAT HAPPENED, WHO IS RESPONSIBLE (ALTHOUGH HE DIDN'T MENTION SADDAM BY NAME) AND WHAT THE SAUDI POSITION IS. HE HAS ALSO CAST THE IRAQI INVASION AS A CRISIS FOR THE WHOLE WORLD (NOT JUST THE ARAB WORLD) AND MADE IT CLEAR TO THE SAUDI PUBLIC THAT IT IS A DIRECT THREAT TO SAUDI SECURITY.

¶5. (C) IN DOMESTIC POLITICAL TERMS, THE SPEECH WAS IMPORTANT BECAUSE IT PROVIDED A CLEAR, PUBLIC EXPLANATION FOR THE INTRODUCTION OF U.S. FORCES. OUR RAPIDLY GROWING MILITARY PRESENCE HERE IS NO SECRET AND FAHD COULD ILL AFFORD TO WAIT TOO LONG BEFORE EXPLAINING SUCH A DRASTIC STEP TO HIS SUBJECTS. NOW THAT HE HAS DONE SO AND EMPHASIZED THE TEMPORARY NATURE OF OUR SUPPORT, WE BELIEVE THAT THE DOMESTIC REACTION WILL BE MANAGEABLE FOR SOME TIME. THIS WILL NOT LAST FOREVER, HOWEVER.

¶6. (C) ALTHOUGH SADDAM'S KUWAIT BASHING AMUSED MANY SAUDIS AT FIRST, FAHD'S SPEECH RELATING THE INVASION TO SAUDI ARABIA'S OWN SECURITY SHOULD QUICKLY CHANGE PUBLIC ATTITUDES. SADDAM IS HARDLY THE POPULAR FIGURE HERE THAT HE SEEMS TO BE IN SOME OTHER ARAB COUNTRIES. SAUDI RELIGIOUS ELITES HAVE NO LOVE FOR SADDAM'S SECULAR, BAATHIST SOCIALIST IDEOLOGY.

¶7. (C) ON THE OTHER HAND, RELIGIOUS CONSERVATIVES ALSO FEAR WESTERN CULTURAL INROADS INTO SAUDI ARABIA. THE LONGER LARGE NUMBERS OF WESTERN TROOPS ARE PRESENT IN SAUDI ARABIA THE GREATER THOSE FEARS WILL BECOME.

¶8. (C) IMPORTANTLY FOR U.S./SAUDI RELATIONS, FAHD HAS PUBLICLY THANKED THE U.S. FOR RESPONDING TO SAUDI ARABIA'S CALL FOR ASSISTANCE IN ITS DEFENSE. WHILE NO ARAB WILL MISS THIS MESSAGE, IT IS ALSO CLEAR THAT FAHD'S STRESS ON THE TEMPORARY NATURE OF THE FOREIGN MILITARY PRESENCE HERE, THE DEFENSIVE POSTURE OF THAT PRESENCE, AND THE FACT THAT THE FRIENDLY FOREIGN FORCES WILL LEAVE IMMEDIATELY AT THE KINGDOM'S REQUEST WAS MADE TO ALLAY CONCERNS BY MANY SAUDIS OVER THE MOTIVES OF THE GROWING U.S. BUILD-UP IN THE KINGDOM.

¶9. (C) NONETHELESS, FAHD HAS NOW OPENLY TIED THE U.S. AND THE KINGDOM TOGETHER IN THE FACE OF THE IRAQI MILITARY THREAT. SADDAM MAY HAVE REDRAWN THE MAP OF THE MIDDLE EAST, BUT HE DID NOT ANTICIPATE ALL THE CONSEQUENCES OF HIS ACTIONS. NOT ALL THE CHANGES ARE GOING TO BE TO HIS LIKING BY ANY MEANS.

¶10. MINIMIZE CONSIDERED.

FREEMAN